

A N
A N S W E R

To all the
EXCUSES and PRETENCES
Which Men ordinarily make
for their not coming to the
Holy Communion.

To which is added,

A brief Account of the End and Design
of the Holy Communion, the Obligation
to receive it; the Way to prepare for it;
and the Behaviour of our selves, both at,
and after it.

Fitted for the meanest Capacities, and very
proper to be given away, by such as are
charitably inclined.

By a Divine of the Church of England.

The Eighth Edition Corrected.

D U B L I N :

Printed by S. Powell, for J. Hyde, R. Gunne,
R. Owen, and E. Dobson, Booksellers, 1724.
Price 3 d. or 20 s a Hundred.

327
2

To the Reader.

*If thou hast received any Satisfaction
or Benefit by this little Book, lend it to
thy Neighbour for his Good.*



An Answer to all the *Excuses* and *Pretences* which Men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion.

A Certain Man made a great Supper and bade many; and sent his Servant at Supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began TO MAKE EXCUSE: Luk. 14. ver. 16. &c. The design of this Parable is to represent the manner of God's dealing with the People of the Jews, upon their rejecting the Faith of Christ, and refusing to embrace the Gospel. The Apostles of Christ, who were the Servants of God, were sent and commanded, in the first Place, to Preach the glad tidings of the Gospel to them; and to invite them to come, and partake of that Blessing and Happiness, which was offered them by God, through Faith in, and Obedience unto his Son Christ *Jesus*. But they, generally having their hearts, wholly in a manner addicted to the Love of this World, had no Inclination to receive so pure and spiritual an Institution; and did not only themselves reject, but also prosecuted others for embracing the Christian Profession; despising and treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith they should have been Sanctified, an unholy thing; and even doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace, which would

A 2

have

have wrought upon their Hearts in order to their Conversion. As therefore the Man in this Parable, who made the Supper, was offended with those who did not come when they were invited; and therefore wholly excluded them from his Table; and sent his Servant to call others in their room (as you may find it in the latter part of it :) So did Almighty God cast off the People of the Jews, upon their obstinate rejecting of *Jesus* Christ; giving them up to be destroyed and scattered by the Power of the *Romans*; and commanded the Apostles to go out into all parts of the World, to gather a Church and a peculiar People, unto him from among the Gentiles. But my present Aim in Reflecting upon this Parable, lies clear another way; namely, to represent, and reprove, those *Excuses* and *Pretences*, which so many Men do make for their gross neglect of the *Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ*, notwithstanding that God, by the Mouth of his Ministers, does so frequently call, and earnestly invite them thereunto. And indeed this matter is in so lively a manner, represented in the whole design of it, that I think it is scarce possible to draw a more exact Parallel.

For here, in the first place, we have Almighty God making a Supper for us: for the feeding and nourishing of our Souls, in Vertue and Piety, through the Passion and Death, of our Saviour Christ *Jesus*, which he has appointed for ever to be commemorated by our eating of this Bread, and drinking of this Cup in Remembrance of him. To this Supper we are, not once only, but often

bid

bidden; by the frequent Admonitions and Exhortations of God's Ministers address'd unto us, that we should come and be partakers of this Holy Communion: And as the Guests who were invited in this Parable had framed some weak and impertinent excuses, for their not coming; One had *bought a piece of Ground*, another *five yoke of Oxen*; and a third had *Married a Wife*; none of which things needed to have hindred them from accepting of the good Man's kindness: Just so we, when from Month to Month, and from Year to Year, we continually turn our backs upon God's Holy Table; have yet some sort of pretences wherewith we endeavour to satisfie our Consciences, and to excuse this gross and scandalous neglect of which we are Guilty.

That our Saviour Christ *Jesus* Died for our Sins; that it is only for the sake of his merits and Sufferings, that we can hope for Pardon and Eternal Life at the hand of God; That, before his Death, he left this command with all that should be call'd by his Name, that they should *Eat of this Bread, and Drink of this Cup in remembrance of him*; whereby we are oblig'd to shew forth his death until his second coming: And lastly, that this Ordinance is the *Communion* of the *Body and Blood of Christ*; or, in other terms, the means whereby we do Communicate in the Benefits of that Sacrifice, which Christ offered, and in the merits of that Death and Passion, which he underwent in his *Body*, and by the Shedding of his *Blood* for us; and consequently, that the receiving hereof, if duly perform'd, is not only our duty, but also a great advantage and

benefit unto us; all these things I say, are so universally owned by all who profess Christianity, that I need not offer any thing for the proof of them, or any part of them. But then surely one would think that when men, who are thus persuaded, do so often, and for so long a time absent themselves from this ordinance, there must be some insuperable difficulties, and obstacles in their way, which it is beyond their strength or power to remove; or else that they would never, at the same time, both neglect their Duty, and forego their Interest. And Yet I doubt not but to make it appear, as plainly as any thing can be, that there is nothing which we can, at any time, pretend as an hindrance of our coming to the Holy Communion; but what either is really, or ought to be, no hindrance at all; or else is such as it is in our power, by that grace and assistance which God never denies to those who seek it, wholly to remove and put out of the way.

To come to the Matter then, and that I may proceed in an orderly Method; I shall reduce all the Impediments, which Men do ever alledge for their not coming unto the Holy Communion, to these Five Heads: That is to say, either, *First*, That they are Sinners, and therefore dare not come; or, *Secondly*, That they are so continually engaged, and taken up with Business, that they have not time to prepare themselves for it; or, *Thirdly*, That when they do endeavour to prepare themselves, they find they cannot do it, as it ought to be done; or, *Fourthly*, That having formerly received the Communion, they find themselves never

ver the better for it, and therefore think it to no purpose to come again ; or, *Lastly*, That they are not well satisfied with the manner of Celebrating, Administring, and Receiving this Ordinance in our Church, and therefore cannot join with our Congregations in it : Nor is there, I think, any Thing that can be urged by way of Excuse for not coming to the Holy Communion, but what I shall fairly examine, and I hope effectually confute, under some one or other of these Particulars.

First then, some Men may say, that they are great Sinners, and therefore, upon that account, dare not come to the Holy Communion, for fear lest they should be unworthy Receivers, and so, instead of obtaining any benefit thereby, should only *Eat and Drink their own Damnation*.

To this I answer, that if any Man lies under the guilt of any Sin, and does not repent of it, and Heartily resolve to forsake and amend it ; it is indeed a Presumption and a Sin for such a Person, whilst he continues in that State, to come to the Communion. But then I must tell him also, that not only his coming to the Holy Communion, but even his very *Prayers* are an *Abomination* to God, *Prov. 28. 9.* For what is it else but a perfect Affront, and even a Mocking of the Divine Majesty, for a Man to make a shew of Worship and Honour to him, whilst, at the same time, he goes on in wilful disobedience to his known Commands ? which I wish were well and seriously considered by those Men, who make no scruple of addressing themselves to God in Prayer, whilst, by reason of their Sins, of which they have not repented,

they dare not approach unto this Holy Table.

But whatever Sins a Man has been guilty of in Times past, if he truly repents of them, and heartily forsakes them for the Time to come; God has so often and so plainly promis'd in this Case, to grant a full and free Pardon of them, that they cannot justly be pretended as any Obstacle, which would hinder us from approaching to him in any of his Ordinances.

Since then it is in the Power of every Man (at least of every one, who by a long Course of Wick- edness has not provoked God wholly to withdraw his Grace from him) by that Grace and Assistance, which God continually offers unto us, to repent of his Sins, and amend his Life: If such a Man looks upon his Sins as a Bar between him and the Holy Communion; yet it is plainly such a Bar as is in his Power to remove, and therefore can never justly be pleaded as an Excuse in his behalf.

But some Man perhaps may say, that though he should beg God's Pardon for his Sins past, and sincerely resolve to forsake them; yet he fears, that being frail, he may some time or other be prevail- ed on, by his own Weakness, or the Strength of a Temptation, to break those Resolutions which he has made, and return again to his Sins. And if this should ever be the Case with him, he doubts whether God would ever again admit him to Par- don and Reconciliation. And therefore he thinks it safer to abstain from the Holy Communion, ra- ther than to run the Hazard of being for ever ex- cluded from the Hopes of Heaven.

In Answer to this I shall offer these three Things

First

First, Altho' a Man does plainly foresee, that hereafter he shall be most likely sometimes to fall into some Sins of Frailty and Infirmary, (such as a hasty Word or a sudden and unadvised Action) yet this ought not to hinder him from coming to the Holy Communion: For as St. *James* tells us, that, *In many things we offend all, Ja. 3. 2.* So is there not any Man upon the Face of the Earth, who can be absolutely sure that he shall always hereafter keep him free from all Manner of Sin whatsoever. On the contrary, as there is no Man but what has his Share more or less, of humane Infirmities, so is it most reasonable to conclude, that in the Course of his Life, these will sometimes unavoidably surprize and betray him into some Sins. Against these our Infirmities therefore, we must continually strive; and we may reasonably hope, that by God's Grace, and our own diligent and careful Endeavours, we may every Day more and more prevail against them: But if this were a good Reason for abstaining from the Holy Communion, because a Man cannot at once get a full and perfect Victory over them; I cannot see how, even the best of Men, (who cannot pretend to absolute Perfection,) could safely venture to partake of it: And consequently, this would be the Way wholly to lay aside, and abolish the very Ordinance it self.

Secondly, But as for wilful and deliberate Sins, or returning again unto an habitual Course of Wickedness; there is no Man but, by the Grace of God, and his own Endeavours, may, if he pleases, for ever secure himself against it. For however
God

God may think it fit, for our greater humility, and a farther tryal of us to leave us still exposed to some of the common infirmities of our Nature; yet, in respect of all habitual or deliberate Sins, we may assure our selves, that *he is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may* (if it be not our own fault) *be able to bear it,* 1 Cor. 10. 13. Nor will he fail to *draw nigh unto us,* whilst we continue careful to *draw nigh unto him,* Jam. 4. 8. Let us then but stedfastly resolve, that we will be hearty and industrious, in doing what lies in our own power; and we need not be discouraged by any such fears as these, as long as we are secure that God will never let us want his assistance.

But *Thirdly,* Let us put the case as bad as may be; that after a serious Repentance, and most stedfast Resolutions of Amendment, ratified and confirmed by the reception of the Holy Communion; a Man should be so far prevailed upon by the temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, as to return again to his former wickedness, in as high or a higher degree than before; Yet even in this case we cannot conclude that such a Person is for ever excluded by God from all possibility of pardon and reconciliation. There are indeed some passages of Scripture, that do represent the Condition of such an one to be very dreadful and dangerous: As *Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.* and *Chap. 10. 26, 27.* 2 *Pet 20, 21.* But if, on the other side, we consider how often, and how highly, the Mercy of God is set forth and magnified,

nified, even towards the greatest Sinners, upon their true Repentance, that *he has no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and Live*, Ezek. 33. 11. that *he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance*, 2 Pet. 3. 9. that *tho' our Sins be as Scarlet, or as Red as Crimson*, yet God is ready, upon our Repentance, to make them *as white as Wooll, or Snow*, Isai. 1. 18. From these and many such Passages of Scripture, I think we may well gather, that if the most profligate and Relapsed Sinner, does even after a long time, come at last to such a sense of his own Condition as thoroughly to *turn from the Wickedness that he hath committed*, and to Live the remainder of his days in the practice of Virtue and good Works, *doing that which is lawful and right*, and notwithstanding all his failures, yet at last continues and perseveres therein, that even such a Person as this *shall save his Soul alive*, Ezek. 18. 27. Altho' at the same time, it stands with a great deal of Reason, that the greater a Man's Sins have been, and the oftner he has relapsed into them, the deeper his Sorrow, and the more laborious his repentance must be, in order to obtain his Pardon. But since a possibility of pardon there is, even in this case it self; we must not make the contrary fear a pretence for keeping our selves back from any of the Ordinances of God, and for a more immediate and intimate Communion with him.

And thus much for the first Impediment.

But

But secondly, some men pretend that they are so continually engaged, and taken up with Business, that they have not time to prepare themselves for the Holy Communion, and therefore do not come to it.

To such Men as these I answer, that this Business, which they pretend, is either lawful Business, or unlawful : If it be unlawful Business, and such as cannot be followed with a good Conscience, it must be renounced and wholly laid aside : And to plead this as a Reason for not coming to the Holy Communion, is altogether to aggravate, instead of to excuse, our neglect. But if the Business be it self Lawful, and followed in a Lawful way ; if it neither contains, nor engages us in any thing, which is dishonest, or any way contrary to the Law of God ; such Business as this is so far from unqualifying a Man, that really it rather renders him the more fit to Receive the Holy Communion. For as Idleness is it self a Sin, and the Mother, or at least the Nurse, of all manner of Wickedness ; so Honest and Lawful business is a Duty which every Man is obliged to be diligent in *1 Thess. 4. 11. Eph. 4. 28.* And certainly the performance of a Man's duty will never render him the less acceptable to God, or unfit to draw near unto him in this or any other of his Ordinances.

But there is one particular sort of Business, in which some men think that whilst they are engaged, they cannot be well prepared for the Holy Communion ; and that is a Law-Suit. But to this, the very same Answer must be given that

that is already returned to the Pretence of Business in general. If a Man engages in a Suit of Law, with a Design to wrong or defraud another; if in the Management of it he has recourse to any base and wicked Arts or Contrivances; if not contented fairly to try the Merits of the Cause, he strives by all Ways, to cast personal Reflections upon his Adversary; or in a word, if herein he proceeds in such a Way as is contrary, either to Justice or Charity; such a Law Suit as this, I confess, renders a Man altogether unfit to approach unto God in any Way whatsoever; not only whilst he is engaged in it, but also until he has made Restitution, and Satisfaction, to the best of his Power, for all the Wrong that he has thereby done to his Neighbour. But then why will any Man, who pretends to Christianity, engage in such a Matter as this; which is contrary to common Honesty and a good Conscience? Or if unadvisedly he has engaged himself, before he knew what he did; why does he not withdraw and forbear to prosecute an unjust Cause, or a just one in an unjust Way? Why does he not make Satisfaction to his Neighbour, if he has done him any Wrong? And how can he think to plead that as an Excuse for not coming to God's Holy Table, which it is in his Power to lay aside, and to remedy when ever he pleases?

But on the other side, if he designs no more but fairly to make use of the Law of the Land, and the Power of the Magistrate (who is ordained of God) either to defend, or recover, what in Conscience he is verily perswaded is his just and

and lawful Right; if in the Management of this Business he proceeds honestly, and without any Fraud or Juggle; And lastly, if he bears no Malice, nor offers any Way to vent his Spleen against the Person of his Adversary, but is always free and ready to do him any reasonable Office of Kindness or Friendship; in such a Law-Suit as this there is nothing which is contrary to the Duty of a Christian, nor consequently any thing which needs be in the least, an Hinderance to his coming to the Holy Communion.

But some perhaps will say, that altho' there is nothing sinful or unlawful, either in the Business they are about, or in their Way of managing or following it; yet their Time is so wholly taken up thereby, that they have not Leisure for the Performance of those solemn and particular Devotions, which are necessary in order to their due Preparation. Nay, such may be the Condition of some, that they have not, it may be, so much as a Place of Retirement for their private Devotions (which may be the Case of many Servants and private Soldiers, and such like) and how can they prepare themselves as they ought, or how shall they venture to come, if they are not so prepared?

To this I answer, that it is a Mistake, which some well-meaning Men have entertained, that they think they must not venture to receive the Holy Communion, except they say so many Prayers, and spend so many Hours, in Retirement and Meditation, for some Days immediately before the Celebration of it. Where a Man indeed is at his

own

own Command, and Master of his own Time ; he is much to be approved of and commended, if, upon such an Occasion as this, he spends more Hours, than at other Times in private Prayers, Reading and Meditation ; that he may *trim his Lamp* before he goes *to meet the Bridegroom* ; and cleanse and adorn his *Wedding Garment*, before he comes to the Marriage-Feast. But where the publick Service of a Man's Country, or the private Necessities of himself or his Family, do engage him in so much Business as that he has not such Leisure for Retirement ; if in the midst of his Affairs, he ever takes care to have God in his Thoughts, and often to lift up his Heart to him by private Ejaculations ; and when he has neither Chamber nor Closet, Garden nor Field to withdraw himself into, if he but seriously retires into his own Thoughts (which a Man may do in any Place ; upon his Bed at Midnight, and even in the midst of the greatest Croud in the Day time) and there enquires into his past Sins, and renews his Resolutions of Amendment ; and if all this proceeds from an *honest and well meaning Heart* truly and affectionately disposed, to the Service of God, and the Practice of Piety ; no doubt but it shall be as well accepted by God, as the more solemn Devotions of those who have the better Opportunity for such Performances.

And thus much for the Second Impediment.

Thirdly, Some pretend that when they do endeavour to prepare themselves for the Holy Communion, they find they cannot do it as it ought to be done, and therefore they do not come : To the several Scruples of which Sort of Men, I shall return brief and distinct Answers. Some

Some then do apprehend, that they are not fit to come, because they are ignorant, and not well grounded and instructed in the Principles of Religion.

To this I answer, that, indeed, if a Man be ignorant of those things which are ordinarily necessary to the Salvation of every Christian ; it is evidently not fit that he should come to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be better instructed. But such Instruction as this, is so easy to be had (at least among us) that it must be every Man's own Fault, if he wants it. For how easy is it for every Man, who either reads the Scripture, or hears it read and expounded in our Congregations, sufficiently to learn all the great and necessary Things of the Christian Religion ? As for Example, that God created all Things ; that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God, that he came into the World and took our Nature upon him, to suffer for our Redemption ; that after he had suffered, he rose again from the Dead, and ascended into Heaven, where he remains for ever in the Glory and Majesty of God, making eternal Intercession for us ; and that he shall come again at the End of the World to judge both the Living and the Dead ; (who shall at that Time be raised again) and to sentence every Man, either to everlasting Happiness, or eternal Misery : That every Christian is to be admitted into the Church by Baptism ; that it is his Duty to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World ; and that it is by the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, who is the Giver of spiritual Life unto us, that we are alone enabled

to perform these Duties. And lastly, that, in remembrance of the Death and Passion of our Saviour *Jesus* Christ, we are commanded to eat of that Bread, and Drink of that Cup, which he has appointed; and which is the Communion of his Body and Blood, that is to say, the Means whereby we do communicate in the Benefits of the Sacrifice which he offered, and in the Merits of his Passion, which he underwent in his *Body*, and by the shedding of his *Blood* for our Sakes, as I have already said. All this, I say, is so easie to be learnt and understood, that it is a great shame for any one who lives in a Christian Country, to be ignorant of any Part of it. And he who is thus far instructed in his Religion; and endeavours according to his Ability, to encrease his Knowledge of Divine Things, and hereunto adds the honest and sincere Practice of what he understands, needs never fear that God will reject him for want of more Knowledge. For altho' we must, according to our Capacity, *add to our Virtue, Knowledge*; yet it is not abundance of Knowledge, but much Honesty, Charity, and true Piety, that renders us acceptable and pleasing to God; See 1. Cor. 1. 9. to the 7th Verse of the 2d. Chapter.

Again, Some do find their Faith to be weak and wavering, and Perplexed with Doubts and Scruples, in Matters of Religion; and therefore are afraid to come.

To this I answer, That indeed the stronger and firmer a Man's Faith is, so much the better; and we ought to endeavour, as much as in us lies, that our Faith may ever be built upon sure and solid

Principles, as well for our own Comfort and Satisfaction, as that we may be the better able, upon Occasion, to give an Answer to every one who shall ask us a Reason of the Hope that is in us, 1 Pet. 3. 15. but when a Man has done what he can to strengthen and confirm his Faith, if it still continues infirm and Weak, yet if he be honest and pious in his Life and Practice, he is nevertheless acceptable to God for the weakness of his Faith: For Strength of Faith is not a thing in our Power, and therefore not so much a Duty in us, as a reward which God is pleased to bestow, in such a measure as he thinks fit, upon those who are sincere and diligent in his Service: And *he that is weak in the Faith*, may yet be a very good Christian, and fit to be received into the Church of Christ, altho' he be not qualified for *doubtful Disputations*, Rom. 14. 1. As long as a Tree continues to bring forth plenty of Fruit, we are sure it is alive, nor do we presently cut it down and cast it into the Fire, because it is not altogether so well fixed at the Root, and therefore, it may be subject to be shaken by the Violence of the Wind: And the weakest Faith, if it produces abundance of good Works, shall be accepted by God, when the strongest Faith, if barren and unfruitful, shall be rejected and set a nought by him. See *Jam. 2. 14. &c.* When ever therefore an honest and well-disposed Man finds his Faith to be any way weak and wavering, let him take up the good Man's Speech in the Gospel, *Lord I believe, help thou mine Unbelief*, Mark 9. 24. And let him never fear, but that God who is infinitely gracious and merciful will accept of him.

Some

Some again are afraid that they do not love God as well as they ought ; and the Reason of this Fear is, because they do not find in themselves such warm and affectionate Motions of their Mind towards him, as they apprehend to be suitable to his infinite Excellency and Goodness : And for this Reason they dare not venture to come.

To this I answer, that, indeed, the more ardent and affectionate our Love to God is, so much the better is that, as well as our Faith, for being strong and unshaken. But as our Faith is to be judged of by its Fruitfulness rather than its Firmness (as I have just now shewn) so the Holy Scripture teaches us, That the *Love of God* consists altogether in *Keeping his Commandments*, 1 Joh. 5.

Some People are naturally of such a Temper, more easily to be moved with a passionate Affection towards those they love than others are : and yet others, who do not find such warm Motions within themselves, may be as ready and willing as they, to do Acts of Kindness where they profess a Friendship. Nor is the Love of the latter Sort ever the less to be valued, because it appears to be seated and fixed more in the Judgment and Will, which are subject to less Alteration than the Affections : As the true Love of a Wife to her Husband, is to be measur'd by her Readiness to obey and please him in all Things, much rather than by the Fondness which she expresses to his person. If therefore a Man finds himself stedfastly resolv'd, *with full Purpose of Heart, to cleave unto* God, and upon all Occasions to do what he commands ; ever preferring the pleasing of him before any,

or all, the Honours, Profits, or Pleasures of this World ; he may assure himself that he is a real and true Lover of God ; nor need he absent himself from the Holy Communion, for want of that Ardency and Liveliness of Affection to God, which the very best of Men perhaps do oftner wish for than enjoy, or find within themselves.

Others there are who fear they are not in perfect Charity with all the World : They have sometimes had to do, with Men of base and unjust Dealings, who have broken their Promises, and may be, their Oaths ; and thereby betray'd them who have depended on them ; or have otherwise been guilty of wicked and unworthy Practices. And altho' in Obedience to God's Commands they would not do any thing by way of Revenge even against these very Men ; yet as often as they see them, or do but think of them, they find the very Blood to rise against them, and cannot possibly suppress that Anger and Indignation, which springs up in their Minds against such Persons and therefore they fear that their Charity is defective, and so dare not come to the Holy Communion.

To this I answer, that our Charity towards Man, as well as our Love to God, is to be measured by the Purposes and Resolutions of our Will and our Actions consequent thereto ; and not by the sudden Motions of our Passions and Affections : Which in the Case above-mentioned, may be scarcely so much in our Power, as wholly to be conquered and stilled by us. But whatever passionate Resentments may force themselves in

our Minds, upon such Occasions as these ; if we do not suffer them to break out into bitter and reproachful Expressions, or malicious and revengeful Actions : And if in spite of our Anger we do firmly resolve, in Obedience to God's Command, to return Good, and not Evil, for Evil : In a Word, if, as *St. Paul* directs us, when we are *angry*, we take care and watch over our selves that we *Sin not*, Eph. 4. 26. (which is certainly in our Power, thro' the Grace of God and our own endeavours ;) we need not fear that any such inward Motions of our Passions, as we cannot wholly suppress, but yet do not suffer to break out into any sinful Words or Actions, shall ever be imputed to us as a Breach of Charity.

Others again are afraid that they are not sorrowful enough for the Sins which they have committed, because they do not find their Grief so quick and pungent as they think it ought to be ; nor strong enough even so much as to bring a Tear from their Eyes ; and therefore they dare not venture to come.

To this I answer, that true it is, indeed, that we can never grieve too much for our Sins, wherever we have offended our good and gracious God : And if even *Rivers of Tears* could run down our eyes, on this Occasion, they would all be but little enough. But yet, after all ; our Sorrow for Sin, is not to be measured by the Passionateness of it, which is soon over ; or the Tears it produces, which are as soon dried up ; but is together to be estimated by the Amendment which it causes in our Lives. It is a never failing

Rule which St. Paul gives us to know *godly Sorrow* by, which is that it *worketh Repentance*, 1 Cor. 7. 10. It then a Man has so true and serious a Sense of his Sins, as that it brings him to Repentance, that is to say, to a thorough and lasting Reformation of his Life ; this Sorrow, tho' it never affects him in a passionate Way, or draws any Tears at all from his Eyes ; yet is certainly true godly Sorrow, and such as shall be accepted by God ; because it worketh Repentance, which is the only End for which godly Sorrow is either required or valued.

Others yet again there are who complain, that when they would set themselves to prepare for the Holy Communion, they in a little time grow so tired with the length of those Devotions which are thereunto required, that they are not able to accomplish what they propos'd. And when they would even *force* themselves to continue their Prayers and Meditations, they cannot, with all their Care, keep their Minds fixed, and attentive upon what they are about ; but their Thoughts will unavoidably wander upon other things that are idle and impertinent. And this they apprehend to be the Sin of *drawing near to God with the Mouths, and honouring him with their Lips, while their Heart is far from him*, Ha. 29. 13. And therefore, they dare not come unto his Holy Table.

To this I answer, that whenever we address our selves unto God in Prayer, we ought certainly to use our utmost Endeavours so to fix and compose our Minds, as that our Thoughts may not wander and go astray, if we can possibly hinder the

And he who pretends to pray with his Lips, and does not withal strive that his Heart and Mind may be devoutly affected, is undoubtedly guilty of a great Slight put upon the Majesty of God ; and may justly be taxed with some Part of that Sin which I but just now made mention of. But when a Man has done the best he can to fix his Thoughts, and to keep his Mind from wandering in Prayer ; if after all this, idle and impertinent imaginations, do, against his Will, croud themselves upon him ; and like Flies, tho' continually beaten off, yet still return again and molest him ; in this Case he may well assure himself that God who is gracious and merciful, will never impute that to him as a Sin, which, with all his Endeavours, he cannot help : But it shall only be reckoned upon the Score of his Infirmities, against which indeed he must ever strive ; but it may be he shall never be able wholly to conquer them as long as he lives.

But there is one Piece of Advice which I think very proper to offer unto those that are in these Circumstances ; which is, that they should comprize their private Devotions in as few Words as conveniently they can ; and then they will neither be so apt to be tired, nor their Thoughts to wander therein, as when they are drawn out to a greater length. It is not *much speaking* that makes our Prayers the more acceptable to God, or the sooner heard by him, *Mat. 6. 7.* And it is easy to comprehend all, that is ordinarily necessary to be said in Prayer, in a few Words. The Lord's Prayer is but short, and yet very full ; and cer-

tainly a Form most acceptable to God. The Publican's *God be merciful to me a Sinner*. Luk. 18. 13. was as well received, coming from a sincere and honest Heart, as if he had made his Confession in more Words. And there is no manner of doubt but that short and devout Ejaculations, frequently offered up to God, by a truly pious Soul, shall effectually prevail at the Throne of Grace, when they come from such a Person, as by reason of his natural Frailty and Infirmary, is not so well able to make longer Prayers.

Again, some there are who are given to Mirth and Company-keeping; and know not how well to become serious, and reserved enough, to be fit for the Holy Communion, and therefore they do not come.

I answer, that a chearful and pleasant Disposition is so far from being unlawful, or any way displeasing to God; that, on the contrary, where it is rightly managed, and kept within due Bounds it is commonly very serviceable to the promoting of Peace and Love in the World, which is one of the great Ends of Christian Religion. Let therefore a Man but take *strict* care, that his Mirth be not sinful in its self, nor instrumental to promote Wickedness in the World: Let him not droll upon Religion and Piety, nor *make a mock at Sin*: Let no Jest that is bitter or sarcastical, or tends to the discredit or undervaluing of his Neighbour, or which is any way profane, filthy, or obscene, come forth of his Lips; nor let him shew any manner of Delight or Satisfaction when such things are vented by others: Let him abstain from all de-

bauched

Publick Songs or Stories, which seem to be contrived on purpose to corrupt the World : And let him never promote, but always, as much as he can, discountenance all manner of Rioting, Drunkenness, Lewdness and Profaneness : In a word, let him be sure that his Mirth betrays neither himself, nor others, to any thing which is contrary to Piety, Charity, or Sobriety ; and as long as he keeps himself within such Bounds as these, (which is plainly very possible to every Man who will heartily resolve it) he needs not fear that a chearful and facetious Behaviour, will render him ever the worse a Christian, or the less able to receive the Holy Communion.

And last of all (that I may conclude what I have say under this Head) some there are, who having met with many Crosses and Afflictions in the world, have their Mind so discomposed, and their Thoughts distracted with Care, Grief, or Doubt, that they cannot settle their Minds, as they think they ought, for the Holy Communion ; and therefore they do not come to it.

To this I answer, that if any Trouble or Affliction provokes a Man to Impatience, and promotes so far as to make him murmur and repine against the Providence of God ; this, indeed, is Sin, and must, and may, as all other Sins, be reformed of, as I have already said, under the first Head of this Discourse. But if there be no more in it than this, that the Crosses and Vexations under which a Man lies, do so discompose his Mind, that he cannot keep his Thoughts from wandering when he is at his Devotion ; to this Case I have

have but just now spoken, and need not repeat what I have said upon it.

And thus I have at last done with the Third Impediment ; upon which I have been forced to longer to dwell, because of the many Scruples, and Objections, which it affords.

I shall need to speak but a Word or Two, of the Fourth Impediment, which some Men pretend, namely, that having formerly received the Holy Communion, they find themselves never the better for it ; and therefore think it to no purpose to come again.

To which I answer, that if a Man reaps no Benefit by the Reception of the Holy Communion, the Fault is altogether his own ; because either he does not truly prepare himself for it, or else does not receive it so often as he should. Some Bodies are so disordered, and Stomachs vitiated, that they turn the best Food into corrupt and evil Nourishment : And if a Man of the most healthy Constitution should eat but one Meal a Week, it would never keep him in Health and Strength. But let the Stomach be cleansed, and the Body brought into good Order, and then let the Man eat his constant and daily Meals, and shall find both his Health and Strength increased upon him. And the Case is just the same with this spiritual Food, which is exhibited to us in the Holy Sacrament. Whilst the Soul is polluted and disordered with Sins unrepented of, will certainly rather do us hurt than good to receive it : And when Men partake of it but once in a Year or Two, or, it may be not so often

rep whatever Strength or Refreshment their Souls
 begin to find thereby, is lost and forgot before
 it comes again to be renewed by the same Ordinance.
 But let a Man thoroughly cleanse and
 purge his Soul from Sin by a sincere Repentance;
 and with an honest Heart, and Mind well prepar-
 ed, let him come as often as he can to God's Ho-
 ly Table; and by the frequent and constant Use
 of this Holy Sacrament, he need not doubt but he
 will find himself continually to grow more and
 more in Grace; becoming still better and better
 enabled to resist all Temptations, and daily find-
 ing more and more Quiet and Comfort in his
 Mind and Conscience.

And thus much for the Fourth Impediment.

I come now, in the last Place of all, to speak
 of Word or Two to those who are not well satisfied
 with the Manner of celebrating the Holy Com-
 munion in our Church, and therefore will not
 join with our Congregations in it.

Two Things there are, which they chiefly ob-
 ject against us in this Case: One that we make use
 of such Ceremonies as they cannot comply with;
 and in particular, that the Holy Communion is
 amongst us to be received in the Posture of Kneel-
 ing: And the other is, that we administer it to a
 mixed Congregation, without a strict Enquiry into the
 Qualifications of all those who are admitted to it.

To the first of these I answer, that no Man can
 say, that either Kneeling at the Holy Communi-
 on, or any other of the Rites or Ceremonies which
 we use at the Celebration of it, are sinful and un-
 lawful; because it does not appear that God has
 any

any where *forbid* them. The utmost then that they can pretend, is only that they are improper and inconvenient. Now, besides that others, who may be as good Judges, are of a different Opinion. I would desire to know whether such Things as are not sinful, but only improper and inconvenient can be a sufficient Warrant to any Man to separate himself from the Communion of an orthodox, established Church? If not, then they have no just Reason upon this account to separate from us. But if they be, then I would farther demand, which is the greatest Inconveniency, to kneel at the Communion, or to make a Schism in the Church. And of the two Inconveniencies, whether we ought not always to make choice of the least?

To the other Objection I answer, that when any Man openly appears to be wicked and scandalous in his Life and Conversation; by the Discipline of our Church, we are required to exclude such Person from the Holy Communion, until he give good Evidence of his Repentance and Reformation. But where nothing outwardly appears against a Man, who lives in the Profession of the true Religion; what have we to do to enquire into the Secrets of his Heart, for which he is accountable only to God? And if our Saviour Christ did not exclude even *Judas* himself from the Holy Communion, because, at that time, he had done nothing openly; altho' Christ well knew that he had made a private Agreement with the Chief Priest to betray him; why should we take upon us to be more strict in this Matter? Or who has given us any Authority so to be?

And thus have I examin'd, and I hope sufficient-
 answered, all the Pretences which Men do or-
 narily make for neglecting the Holy Communi-
 . I have but this one Thing to add, and I have
 one ; namely, that as it is a great Sin to receive
 the Holy Communion unworthily, that is to say,
 without true Repentance ; so certainly is it no less
 Sin, to slight and neglect that Ordinance, which
 Christ himself has expressly appointed and com-
 manded in Remembrance of that Death and Passi-
 on which he underwent for us. Let us therefore
 take the Matter into our serious Consideration ;
 and whilst we are so very cautious to avoid the
 danger on the one hand, let us not be so foolish
 to run our selves into as great a Hazard on the
 other. For as he who presumed to come to the
 nuptial Feast, without a *Wedding Garment*, was
 severely punished for his Presumption, *Mat. 22.*
8. So they who neglected to come at all, and
 slighted the Invitation which was given them,
 were accounted as unworthy Persons, and received
 their Doom accordingly, *ver. 7, 8.*

*A brief Account of the End and Design of the
Holy Communion, the Obligation to receive
it, the Way to prepare for it; and the Behaviour of our selves both at, and after*

IN a former Discourse, entitled, *An Answer to all the Excuses and Pretences, which Men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion*; I have endeavour'd to remove all those Obstacles, whether real, or pretended, which many Men, seemeth, either wholly to stop the Way to God's Holy Table, or, at least, to render it very difficult and troublesome to be passed. what I have therein said has had any Influence upon the Minds of well meaning Men, so as to incline them, something more than formerly, to prepare themselves for the partaking of this sacred Ordinance; I hope that what I am now about to offer, may both make them thoroughly sensible of the Obligation which lies upon them thereto, and also sufficiently instruct them in every thing which is necessary, in the Performance thereof to render them worthy Receivers, and acceptable to Almighty God.

Five Things there are which are very necessary to be understood by every one, who would be thoroughly instructed and directed, in order to the receiving of the Holy Communion: Namely, First, For what End and Purpose this Ordinance was instituted and appointed? Secondly, What

Obligation

obligation lies upon every Christian to come and receive it ? Thirdly, How often we all of us ought to partake of it ? Fourthly, What Preparation is necessary in order to it ? And lastly, how we ought to behave our selves both at, and after it ? And altho' I have hinted many things in my former Discourse above mentioned, which might in some sort serve for an Answer to these inquiries ; yet because what is there spoken, which may relate to these Particulars, is only occasionally touched, and but just glanced at ; I have thought it may not be improper a little more fully, and methodically, to handle them.

For the clearing of the first Point proposed, we must call to mind, what the Holy Scripture so often declares to us, that our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ dyed for *us* ; that we are *justified by his blood*, and *saved from Wrath through him* ; and, *tho' we were once Enemies*, are yet upon our true penitence reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, Rom. 5. 8, 9, 10. and thereby put into a capacity of being made eternally happy in the life to come. From whence it will follow, that in the first place, it is the Duty of every Christian, always to be thankful for, and never to forget, or be unmindful of so great a Favour and Benefit, vouchsafed and offered to us ; so secondly, no Man can have an Interest in the Death and Passion of Christ, and is made a Partaker of the Fruits of his Sufferings ; and of that *Propitiation* which he thereby made for the Sins of the World, 1 Joh. 2. 2. he can have no just Ground to hope for lasting Salvation. That therefore both these

Ends

Ends might the more effectully be obtained : And that all Christians might often, in a lively manner be put in mind, and also, at the same time, be made Partakers of the Merits of Christ's Death and Sufferings ; this sacred Ordinance was appointed by him, both as the Commemoration of his Passion, and also the Communion of his Body and Blood. Thus the Apostle St. Paul tells us what three of the Evangelists have also recorded. *That, The Lord Jesus, the same Night in which he was betrayed, took Bread ; and when he had given Thanks he brake it, saying, Take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you ; this do in Remembrance of me. After the same manner he took the Cup, when he had supped ; saying, this Cup is the New Testament in my Blood ; this do ye, as oft as ye drink in Remembrance of me. For (says the Apostle in the same place) as often as ye eat this Bread, or drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come, 1 Cor. 11. 23. &c.* And the same St. Paul tells us, in the sixteenth Verse of the foregoing Chapter, that the Cup of Blessing which we bless is the Communion of the Blood of Christ ; and the Bread which we break, the Communion of the Body of Christ. From which Passages of Scripture it is obviously collect, why this divine Institution is ordinarily called sometimes the *Lord's Supper*, and sometimes the *Holy Communion*.

Here then we have a full and plain Answer to the first Thing proposed to be handled : *Name the End and Purpose this Ordinance was instituted and appointed ?* It was appointed (as we may see) First, to put us in Remembrance of the De-

And Sufferings of our Saviour Jesus Christ : The breaking of the Bread being put to represent the Crucifixion of his Body ; and the Wine his Blood, which was shed for us. And secondly, that it might be to us not only the Commemoration, but to the *Communion* of the Body and Blood of Christ : That is to say, the Means which God has ordained, by the use of which we do communicate in the Benefits of that Sacrifice which Christ offered, and in the Merits of that Death and Passion, which he underwent in his *Body*, and by the shedding of his Blood for us ; as I have already said in my former Discourse.

I come now to the second Thing proposed to be enquired into ; namely, what Obligation lies upon every Christian to come and receive the Holy Communion.

And here in the first place, what Obligation can be stronger than the plain and positive Command of our Saviour Christ himself ? Which he has laid upon us in as express Terms as can be ; that we should *do this* ; that is to say, *Eat of this Bread and drink of this Cup, in Remembrance of him* ; as we may find it in the Words just now quoted, 1 Cor. x. 23. &c. And that these Words were ever understood to contain in them a strict Command perpetually binding all Christians to the Observation of it, most evidently appears, as well from the Context of that Chapter (from the twentieth Verse to the End) as from the constant great Care and Concern which the Apostolick and Primitive Church always shewed, in the maintaining, and decent Celebration of this Ordinance.

But besides the bare Authority of our Saviour Christ, which alone is sufficient to lay an indispensable Obligation upon us ; there are some collateral Circumstances and Considerations which do add an extraordinary Weight and Force to this Command : As namely, that it was given at that very Time when he, who was our best Friend and greatest Benefactor, was just ready to dye and lay down his Life for our Sakes : And not only so, but this Command was given to us to be observed in Remembrance of him and of that Death which he underwent for us.

If a dying *Friend* should, before his Departure out of the World, make any request to me which were not impossible, or unreasonable in it self ; should think my self much wanting in that Friendship which I had professed to him, if I should omit or neglect to perform it. But if this Friend had been one, not of the common Sort, but a very great and extraordinary Benefactor to me ; and beyond this, he were just going to lay down his Life for my Sake ; and lastly, if his Request were that I would do something which might be a Means to keep me always in *Remembrance* of him and of what he had done for me ; certainly I might well be accounted as one of the most barbarous and ungrateful Wretches that ever lived, if I were not very careful most punctually to observe and fulfil whatever should thus be enjoined and laid upon me. Now beside the Authority which our Saviour Christ has to lay an Obligation upon us ; we all of us sure must acknowledge that he is our Friend, our greatest Friend, and chiefest Benefactor.

factor; and that it was for our Sakes alone that he underwent all his Sufferings, and yielded up his Life upon the Cross. And since he has made this Request, and left it as a Command unto all who should believe in him: That they should eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup, in Remembrance of him, and of what he had suffered for us; would fain know how any Man, who calls himself a Christian, can possibly be excused from the greatest Ingratitude as well as Disobedience, if he neglects to do what he thus appears to be so longly and doubly obliged to. And with what confidence can he hope to be saved by the Merits and Passion of Christ, whilst he refuses or neglects to commemorate his Death and Sufferings, in that manner which Christ himself has appointed?

And thus I think we have a sufficient Answer to the second Thing proposed; namely, what Obligation lies upon every Christian to receive the Holy Communion. We are plainly obliged to do it, first, in Point of Duty; because we are thereunto expressly commanded by Christ Jesus our Saviour: and secondly, in Point of *Gratitude*; because this conjunction was laid upon us by our best Friend and greatest Benefactor, when he was just ready to lay down his Life for us, that it might serve as a Means to keep up in his Church a *lively Remembrance* of him and his great Love to us for ever.

I proceed then to the third Thing proposed to be handled, namely, how often we all of us ought to partake of the Holy Communion? The Answer to which Question is briefly and plainly this, *viz.* that every sincere Christian is obliged to *partake*

of the Holy Communion as often as he has an Opportunity for it. . The truth of which Assertion I think will appear beyond all manner of Exception from these two following Considerations.

First, I suppose it will be easily granted, that whosoever is an honest and *sincere Christian*, ought not to let slip an Opportunity, that is fairly offered him of expressing his Thankfulness to Almighty God, for that infinite Mercy vouchsafed unto Mankind, in our Redemption, by the Death and Passion of our blessed Lord and Saviour. For he that is wanting in his Thankfulness to God for so inestimable a Benefit, thereby plainly demonstrates that he is not thoroughly sincere in his Christianity, which indispensably obliges him to do this Duty. Now that the devout Participation of the Holy Communion, is one very fit and proper Way of expressing our Thanks and Acknowledgements to God for our Redemption, by the Sufferings and Death of Christ, for the thankful Commemoration whereof the very Ordinance was appointed, is so very plain, that no Man I think who owns the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and is not misled by false and enthusiastick Notions, can deny or so much as doubt of it. From whence it must needs follow, that he who has a fair Opportunity of receiving the Holy Communion, and yet neglects to partake of it, is deficient in the Expression of his Thankfulness to God ; and consequently is not sufficiently sincere in that Christianity which he professes.

Secondly, Whosoever has an Opportunity offered him of doing a good Act, and has no just Reason

Excuse for his not doing of it, is certainly
 bound and obliged to do it, according to the Op-
 portunity which is so offered. Now that to
 participate of the Holy Communion is a good
 & I have already shewn, in that I have proved
 to be our Duty ; And that there can be no such
 thing as a just Excuse or Reason for not partak-
 ing of it, I have proved at large in my former
 discourse ; in which I have fully answered all
 manner of Pretences of this Nature. The Con-
 sequence then must be, that whosoever has an Op-
 portunity of receiving the Holy Communion, and
 yet neglects to receive it, is most evidently guilty
 of a Failure in his Christian Duty.

But here perhaps I shall be told, that sometimes
 is possible an Opportunity for receiving the Ho-
 ly Communion may offer it self, when a Man is
 not duly prepared for it, and therefore ought not
 to partake of it. To which I answer, that he
 who is a sincere Christian ought never to be un-
 prepared for this Holy Ordinance : Which will
 evidently appear from what I have to say upon

The fourth Thing proposed to be handled ;
 namely, what Preparation is necessary in order
 to the receiving of the Holy Communion ?

Now to this Holy Ordinance (and indeed to all
 solemn Acts of Devotion) a twofold Preparation is
 necessary : First a general, and secondly a parti-
 cular one. I call that a *general Preparation* which
 always ought to be making ; and is not the Work
 of a few Hours only, but should be the main Busi-
 ness of every Man's whole Life. And that I call
 a *particular Preparation*, which is then more espe-

cially to be made whenever we are upon thus approaching to God, and have a particular Design of coming to his Holy Table.

The general Preparation then which is necessary for every Man, that would come with Acceptance to the Holy Communion ; is Repentance for his past Sins, together with a vertuous and holy Life ; in all Points agreeable unto the Law of God (I mean to the best of his Power) and never wilfully or habitually straying away from those Rules and Precepts, which are prescribed to us in the Gospel. For he who having not repented of his Sins, but living still in the wilful Practice of any of them, or the *known* neglect of any Duty, shall offer to approach unto God in any Act of Devotion whatsoever, is so far from doing a Thing which is acceptable to him, that, on the contrary, God has exprest the greatest Abhorrence that well can be unto all such Worship or Service as this. *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord*, Prov. 15. 8. And again, *He that turneth away his Ear from hearing the Law, even his Prayer shall be Abomination*, Chap. 28. besides a Multitude of other Texts that might be quoted to the same purpose. And here we must ever remember what the Apostle Saint James tells us, Chap. 2. 10. And what in it self also is most highly rational ; namely, that *whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet (wilfully) offend in any one Point, and continue therein without Repentance, is guilty of all*. For (according to the Apostle's Reasoning in the next Verse) since the same God who forbids one Sin, has also forbid

then all others : He who wilfully persists in any one Sin, whatever it be ; plainly despises the very Authority of God, and thereby, as much as in him lies, undermines the very Foundation of his whole Law.

I will not then stand to dispute how those Words of St. Paul are to be interpreted, that, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself*, 1 Cor. II. 29. But this I take to be as plain, both from Reason and Scripture, as such a Thing can be ; that not only he who comes to the Holy Communion ; but who dares to offer up his Prayers to God, while he *wilfully* persists in any known Sin, or the neglect of any known Duty, is guilty of a very great Affront to the Divine Majesty. To come to the Marriage Feast without a *Wedding Garment*, was resented as a high Contempt of the King who made the Invitation, *Mat. 22. 12, 13.* And to *bow the Knee* to Christ, and cry *Hail King of the Jews*, at the same time when they *Spit on him and smote him on the Head* ; was nothing but a redoubling of their Mockery, *Mat. 27. 29, 30.* And I appeal to the common Sense of every Man, whether he is not guilty of the very same Sort of Practice towards Almighty God, who bends his Knees or shews outward Signs of Reverence to him in Prayers or at the Holy Communion ; while his Heart and Affections are not truly bent to serve and obey him in all his Actions ; but he, on the contrary, lives in an habitual Violation of his Laws, and a continued Contempt of his Power and Authority ?

But besides this which I call a *general Preparation* on ; there is also a more *particular Preparation* which is very proper ; and *ordinarily* necessary in order to the Reception of the Holy Communion. Which the Apostle St. Paul tells us, is *Self Examination*. *Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup*, says he 1 Cor. 11. 28. That is, in other terms, that whenever a Man designs to present himself at God's Holy Table, he ought before hand seriously to call himself to an Account, whether or no he be so qualified as to be acceptable to God when he comes there. That is to say, whether or no he really and truly has that general Preparation, of which I have been just now speaking ; and without which he ought not to come. For if such an Enquiry as this be not often and carefully made, the Filth and Pollution of Sin will, by little and little, in a manner almost insensible, cleave again to our Souls till by Degrees it destroys and takes away that general Preparation which ought always to be kept and maintained by us. Whilst we sometimes *slumber or sleep* our Lamps will be apt to burn dim ; and therefore must be new *trimmed* at our going out to *meet the Bridegroom*, Matt. 25. 5, 6, 7. And when we have put on the *Wedding Garment*, Matt. 22. 12. It is yet very fit that as often as we come to the Marriage Feast, we should examine and take a careful View of our Dress ; for fear it should have contracted some Spot or Defilement.

But here perhaps it will be demanded : Is this all the Preparation that is necessary to the receiving of the Holy Communion ; that a Man should

lead

and a virtuous and Christian Life ; and not be
 conscious to himself (upon the Examination of his
 Conscience) that he continues in any unrepented
 Sin ? Is it not absolutely necessary that upon *every*
 Occasion as this, he should run through the
 whole Catalogue of Sins, and examine himself par-
 ticularly upon every one of them, with all their
 Circumstances and Aggravations ? And ought not
 also for some Days before hand, to sequester
 himself from all worldly Business whatsoever, and
 spend his Time only in Prayer, Meditation,
 Reading, and such like Acts of Devotion.

That honest and lawful Business is never to be
 reckoned as an Hindrance from the Holy Commu-
 nion, I have shewn in my former Discourse. And
 as to the rest of what is here urged, I answer, that
 in a strict and particular Examination of our
 Conscience is undoubtedly sometimes the Duty of
 every Man ; for except we thus *search and try our*
ways ; that we may clearly discern wherein we have
 gone astray, we shall not be able to *turn again to*
the Lord, as we ought to do, *Lam. 3. 40.* Nor do
 think that any time can be more proper and con-
 venient for this, than when we are about to ap-
 proach unto God's Table. That some suitable
 Prayers, and proper Meditations also, ought to be
 used upon such an Occasion as this (as indeed upon
 every particular Occasion whatsoever, that is of
 considerable moment) every Man's own Rea-
 son must tell him is a Part of his Christian Duty.

Is this that every time he receives the Holy Commu-
 nion he should thus nicely examine himself, if
 there be not some other particular Reason for it ;
 And

And that so much Time extraordinary should ways beforehand be spent in Prayer and Meditation, more than at other Seasons ; is what I find no Argument, either from Reason or Scripture, to prove necessary. It is beyond dispute, that the Primitive Christians did every Lord's Day (not oftner) receive the Holy Communion : And they had thought themselves obliged to spend much Time always in particular Preparation some Men seem to think necessary ; it would scarce have been possible for them to have had sufficient Leisure from their Devotions, to have followed the Business of their Callings, to get a Livelihood for themselves and their Families : And the extraordinary long Exercises of Prayer, Reading and Meditation, which some do require by way of Preparation to this Ordinance ; as they do fright and keep away many from it, who find that they are not well able to go through with them. So is the Performance of them such a tiresome Thing to others, that it often makes them heavy and unapt even for their ordinary Devotions for some time after they have received the Holy Communion. And therefore for the Readers better Satisfaction and Direction, I have at the End of this Discourse set down a few short Rules how we ought always to prepare our selves for the receiving of it.

I come now to the last Thing proposed to be touched on : Namely, how we ought to behave our selves both at and after the Holy Communion ? In which the very Nature and Design of the Ordinance it self will be a most plain and clear

ar Direction to us. For since the Intent of it is only a solemn and perpetual Commemoration of the Death of Christ; but also the Communion or Participation of the Merits of his Passion (as we have already shewn) it will follow, first, that in this Office, we ought to behave our selves with due Seriousness, Attention, and Reverence. And secondly, that after it, we ought to return our humble Thanks to Almighty God, for the great Benefit which he is pleased to vouchsafe unto us by it. For our more particular Direction herein, I have to this Discourse subjoined some short Rules, Prayers and Meditations, which I take to be proper to the Occasion, and I hope may be useful to those of an ordinary Capacity; for from this small Work is chiefly designed. To which therefore I refer the Reader, without adding here any more upon this Point.

Chief Rules for Preparation for the Holy Communion, and Behaviour both at and after it; with short Prayers and Meditations suitable to that Occasion.

Of general Preparation.

HE that would maintain and keep himself in a constant *general Preparation* for the Holy Communion; so as always to be fit, upon the short-Notice, to partake of it (which certainly every Christian ought ever to endeavour after) must be careful in the Observation of these following Rules.

1. He

1. He must be diligent in his Endeavours know and understand all the several Parts and Branches of his Duty to God, to all other Men, and to himself. For which End he must be careful to make the best use he can of all those Means of Instruction and Knowledge which God has put to his Power : Such as reading the Holy Scriptures and other good Books, or hearing the Word read ; attending upon the publick Offices of Preaching, Catechising, and the like, *Prov. 4. 23. Job. 5. 39. 2 Tim. 3. 15. Job. 13. 17.*

2. He must upon all Occasions, be industrious and zealous in the avoiding of every Sin, and in the Practice and Performance of every Duty, according to his Ability and Opportunity for the same. *Tit. 2. 11, 12, 13, 14. Mat. 7. 21. Luk. 12. 47.*

3. He must very often think and meditate upon his Ways, and all his particular Practices ; and examine, whether or no they are agreeable to the Rules of his Duty : That wheresoever he finds he has been deficient or done amiss, he may take the better care to rectify and amend it for the Time to come, *Psal. 4. 4. and 119. 59. Lam. 3. 40.*

For which End and Purpose I recommend the following, easy, but very profitable Task ; which I would have every Man constantly to impose upon himself. Namely, two or three Times in the Course of each Day to carry his Thoughts back and seriously to consider what he has that Day been doing, and how he has spent his Time from the very Minute that he first awakened from Sleep. As for Example, When first I awaked, did I think upon God, and recommend my self to his Almighty

Care and Protection? Or did not worldly, or
 may be sinful Thoughts first take Possession of
 Heart? Again, I was lately in such or such
 company: How, and after what Manner, did I
 behave my self? Were all my Words and Actions
 innocent, modest and decent? Did I give no Of-
 fence to God, or Scandal to the World, by any
 thing which there I either said or did? &c. Such
 questions as these, if we would constantly and se-
 riously put home to our Consciences, while Things
 remain *fresh in our Memories*; it is evident what a
 mighty Influence it would have upon us, to re-
 strain us from Evil, and excite us to do that which
 is Good.

Of particular Preparation.

1. Whenever Notice is given of the Celebrati-
 on of the Holy Communion, let every sincere
 and devout Christian immediately resolve by no
 means to miss that Opportunity of Commemora-
 ting the Sufferings, and Communicating in the
 merits of his blessed Lord and Saviour.

2. And in the midst of all his Business (in the
 mean Time) let him very often call to Mind, that
 through a Day he must not be absent from God's Holy
 Table; and therefore must be very careful not to
 do any Thing, which may render him unfit for it.

3. At some Seasons it is very necessary that eve-
 ry Man should set a little Time apart for the more
 distinct and particular Examination of his Consci-
 ence: For which End and Purpose I earnestly re-
 commend that Catalogue of Sins which is drawn
 up at the End of that excellent Book, *The whole
 Duty of Man*, which I would have every Man very
 distinctly

distinctly to go over ; and upon every Particular to recollect his Actions, and ask his Conscience Have I been guilty of this ?

4. But where a Man very often receives the Communion, and never misses any Opportunity for it ; I do not conceive that such a particular Examination is every Time absolutely necessary nor have all Men at all Times Leisure enough for it. But however, ordinarily, I think, no Man ought to receive the Holy Communion without some previous Examination of himself. For the more easy and regular Performance of which, would have it remembred, that the whole Duty of a Christian is reducible to these three Heads *Mat. 22. 37, &c.*

1. To love God in the highest Degree.
2. Sincerely (and not corruptly or sensually) to love himself.
3. To love every Man with the same Sort of Love, (tho' not in the same Degree) as he loves himself.

5. Every Time, then, that a Man receives the Holy Communion, I would have him, beforehand seriously to put, at least, these three Questions home to his Conscience.

1. Do I really and truly love God above all Things ? And do I effectually shew this Love by a due Honour and Respect to him in all my Thoughts, Words and Actions ?
2. Have I a sincere and upright Love for myself ? That is, do I love my Soul, better than my Body ? And am I more heartily concerned to secure my everlasting Happiness

in the World to come, than to compass my Pleasure or Profit in this Life?

4. Have I a real and sincere Love for all Mankind without Exception? And do I effectually shew this my Love by hurting no Man, by Word or Deed, (where I can possibly avoid it) and by being ready to do good to every Man whatsoever, in all Ways, and upon all Occasions, wherever I have Ability and Opportunity?

And if these three Questions are but *seriously* meditated upon *for a little Time*; there is scarce any that a Man has been guilty of, but they will bring it out to him.

5. When a Man by the Examination of his Conscience, has set his Sins full in his View; then let him insert into his ordinary Devotions, this some such like Confession of them to God.

Most gracious God! I thy unworthy Creature, here humbly acknowledge my Sins before thee. And besides those which I have now recollected, I do not but own that I lie under the Guilt of many other Transgressions; although I am not able to repent or remember them. Nor can I deny but that I have committed many Sins even contrary to the Motives of thy Grace, and the Light and Conviction of my Conscience. And therefore do most justly deserve the Severity of thy Wrath and Indignation against me. O Lord, I fly unto thee for Mercy. For the Sake of thy Son Jesus our most blessed Redeemer, be merciful to me in the Pardon of all my Sins, known and unknown: And so guide and assist me by thy good Grace,
that

*that for the Time to come, I may be duly careful to
 stain from every evil Thing ; may grow in Grace
 and be zealous of Good Works ; and maintain a Con-
 science void of Offence, towards God, and towards
 Men ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

To which let him add this short Prayer.

Most merciful God, who hast given thine only
 Son Jesus Christ to die for our Sins : Grant
 me thy Grace, I humbly beseech thee, that I may
 never be unmindful, but always truly thankful for
 thy inestimable Benefit vouchsafed unto me by his Death
 and Suffering. And so fit and prepare me, O Lord
 by the Assistance of thy Holy Spirit, that both at
 and all other Times, I may be rightly qualified to
 commemorate the Passion of my Blessed Redeemer, in
 that holy Ordinance which he has appointed ; and
 thereby effectually to partake of that Redemption
 which he has wrought for all Mankind. Through
 the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Of Behaviour at and after the Holy Communion

1. At the Holy Communion, and at all other
 Times in the Worship of God, let every Man
 strive as much as he can, to keep his Mind inward
 and fixt upon what he is about ; and to lay aside
 not only all wicked Thoughts, but also, all other
 as are impertinent to the present Business.

2. Let him also take care to behave himself
 with that outward Decency and Composedness
 as may be a sufficient Token of that inward Devotion
 and Reverence, which he bears in his Heart
 with

without gazing about, or any way unnecessarily moving his Body, or whispering to any one that hear him, or the like.

3. While the Service is performing, let him all along join with the Minister and Congregation, with his Heart and Thoughts lifted up to God; and with his Tongue too, where the Liturgy requires that any Thing should be spoken aloud to the People; as in the Responses, the Confession, the Lord's Prayer, and the Doxology.

4. But let him take care likewise to avoid all manner of Affectation; and not to behave himself in such a manner, as if he had a mind to be taken notice of for a Person of extraordinary Devotion.

For which Reason, whatever private Prayers or Meditations he may have to offer to God; let him put them up in his Thoughts alone, and let not his Voice be heard, but when the publick Service requires it.

5. When he has received the Bread, let him utter up this, or some such short Ejaculation to God.

O good God! Grant that by the Sufferings of my Saviour, who was crucified for me, I may escape eternal Sufferings, and be made Partaker of everlasting Glory.

And when he has received the Cup, let him in his Heart thus say,

O gracious God! Grant that by the shedding of Blood of thy dear Son, I may obtain the Remission of all my Sins.

6. While the Bread and Wine are distributing to the rest of the Congregation, let him entertain

tain himself with such Sort of Meditations and Prayers as these.

1. Let him again bethink himself, what those Sins are to which he has been most inclined : And let him, in the Presence of God, seriously and steadfastly renew his Resolutions of being careful to abstain from them for the Time to come.

2. Let him also consider what Opportunities he ordinarily has for the doing of any good Works and let him steadfastly purpose ever hereafter to be diligent in making use of them.

3. And let him hereunto add the following short Prayer.

Merciful God, assist me with thy Grace and Holy Spirit, that I may always keep those Vows and good Resolutions which thou hast enabled me to make ; that I may never return to any of my former Sins : But ever hereafter serve thee faithfully in the constant Practice of Vertue and Religion, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

4. And here let him express his Charity, by putting up a Prayer for all Mankind in this or the like Form.

Lord, if it be thy gracious Will, extend thy Mercy and Compassion unto all Mankind. Inlighten the Minds of those that are ignorant ; and move the Wills of those that are obstinate ; that they may all receive thy holy Truth, and carefully live in the Practice of it. Pardon all my Enemies, O Lord, and bring them, and all of us all the World over, to true Repentance, that we may all live holily and righteously here, and may in the End be happy with thee hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

5. And then let him entertain himself with
 reading and meditating upon some select Portions
 of the Holy Scripture, until such Time as the Mini-
 ster is ready to proceed with the publick Office. I
 will not here transcribe any particular Texts,
 but will leave every Man to make choice of such
 as are most agreeable to him. Only if he be at a
 distance, let him read the hundred and nineteenth
 Psalm, where he shall easily find proper Matter
 enough to employ his devoutest Thoughts upon
 this Occasion.

6. When the Service is ended and the Congre-
 gation dismissed; let him depart to his Home or
 place of Abode. And as soon as he has a conveni-
 ent Opportunity of retiring into some private
 place: Let him first look back and consider, whe-
 ther or no, in the Performance of this Holy Office
 which he has so lately been at, he has behaved
 himself in all Things as he ought to have done,
 and if he finds that he has been any way short or
 defective therein, let him resolve to take better
 care for the Time to come.

7. And then let him conclude with this or the
 following Prayer.

*Lord I desire to return my most humble and hearty
 Thanks to thee for all thy Blessings both spiritual
 and temporal, which thou hast vouchsafed to me. At
 this Time particularly, I praise and bless thy holy Name
 for that Opportunity which thou hast this Day given me
 for commemorating the Death and Passion of my blessed
 Redeemer, and also of partaking of his Merits, in the
 participation of that holy Ordinance which he has ap-
 pointed. Lord pardon all the Weaknesses and Defects
 which*

which I have been guilty of, in the Performance that great Duty : And assist me with thy Grace beseech thee, that in the whole Course of my Life may ever be careful to fulfil and perform those Vows and Resolutions which I have made to thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

8. And last of all, let him never, as long as he lives, be forgetful of what he has thought, said and done, both before and at the Holy Communion. But let the Remembrance of it be a constant restraint upon him from all manner of Wickedness, and let him upon the assault of any Temptation thus bethink himself.

At such a Time I received the Holy Communion and then I seriously resolved, and solemnly promised to Almighty God, that I would heartily endeavour at all Points to live like a Christian. Shall I then upon Account cheat, lie, curse, swear, talk profanely, obscenely, or the like ? No ! God forbid. I have engaged my self to God to be another Sort of a Man : And what can I expect but Wrath and Indignation from him if knowingly and wilfully I should violate those Promises which I so deliberately and stedfastly made to him.

FINIS.

Books sold by R. Owen, Bookseller, in Skinner-Row.

AN Essay towards making the Knowledge of Religion easy to the meanest Capacity. Price 2 s. a dozen. Some short and plain Directions for the spending one Day well. At 12 d. a dozen.

Short and plain Directions for all that go to Service. At 6 d. a dozen.

Plain Instructions for the Young and Ignorant. Comprised in a short and easy Exposition of the Church Catechism. At 2 s. 6 d. a dozen.

All by the same Author, and very proper to be given away by such as are charitably inclined.

mance
y Grace
y Life
ose Vo
throw

ong as
ght, fa
amunio
stant R
ked ne
nptatio

muni
promi
avou
upon
anely
ve eng
an: A
om h
Prom
to h

Row.
Religi
en.
one D

At 8

mpri
techi
n aw

27
2.